

Town of Washington

News and Calendar



March, 2006

A Web Site for Washington Island – At Last

I can remember talk about having a Town web site going back at least five years. Well, we finally have one. Point your browser to www.washingtonisle.org and check it out. You might want to bookmark the site as well. The webmaster, and the person responsible for actually making the web site happen, is Officer Chris Utecht, who was a web master for the UW Milwaukee Police web site. Thank you Chris!

If there's something you would like to have posted on the Town web site, or if you want to make a comment, contact me at chairman@washingtonisle.org. The web site is intended to be a place to find Town news and information.

And a note for the future: We are working on getting a "dotgov" URL for the Town. This has turned out to be a bit more complicated than expected, but it should be ready soon. It will be www.washingtonisland-wi.gov. We'll announce it in the next Newsletter and it will also be on the web site. Don't worry, when it happens, the present web address and e-mails will be forwarded automatically to the new address for several months.

Medical Clinic Agreement – Latest Update

The February Newsletter explained the alternatives that were being discussed in the ongoing negotiations with Door County Memorial Hospital/North Shore Medical Clinic. Throughout, we have insisted that Island residents have a medical provider available on the Island 24 hours a day, seven days a week, while still allowing the Island doctor to have reasonable time off.

During the past month these negotiations have finally born fruit. The Clinic Advisory Committee is expecting to submit a final draft agreement to the Town Board for

approval at the March 13 meeting.

The key to our success has been the close relationship between Island residents John and Carole Machek and the senior management of Bellin Hospital. Both John and Carole were longtime Bellin employees before retiring to



Tower Stairs in Winter

the Island in 2004 – John as head chaplain for 30 years, and Carole as a Registered Nurse and leader of the quality resource department. As a result of contacts that they initiated on behalf of the Town, Bellin Hospital has agreed to provide Nurse Practitioners or Physicians Assistants – known as midlevel practitioners – to North Shore Medical Clinic to work on

Washington Island as needed.

Here's the way the agreement will work: The Island physician will be free from being on-call every other weekend and one half of the six major holidays.

During those periods, a midlevel practitioner will be on the Island and will respond to 911 calls and all other calls as determined by the Clinic's existing procedures for after hours calls. (More about this later.)

In addition, a midlevel practitioner will be here to cover the Island doctor's four weeks of vacation and two weeks of Continuing Medical Education each year. During those times, the midlevel will staff the Island Clinic and respond to all after-hours calls as well as 911 emergencies. This is a win-win solution: The Island doctor gets a reasonable amount of time off, and Island residents and visitors are assured that there is always a qualified medical provider available on the Island (barring unforeseen circumstances).

I should also point out that there will be no additional costs to Island taxpayers – everything will be covered under the medical subsidy we have been paying for many years.

Now for a word about after hours calls to the Clinic. For quite some time, callers to the Clinic after hours have been instructed to call 911 if the call is an emergency, otherwise to call an 800 number to contact the triage nurse at the Door County Memorial Hospital Emergency Room, who assesses the situation and calls either the Island doctor or the Family Practice on-call doctor on the mainland.

Beginning soon, North Shore Medical Clinic expects to replace this with a system called "Nurse Direct" for non-911 calls. This system employs highly trained health

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professionals, who use very sophisticated question and answer protocols to assess the medical situation presented by the caller. Experience has shown that, in a great number of the calls, Nurse Direct is able to resolve the medical issue at the time of the initial call. For calls that cannot be resolved by Nurse Direct, the caller is referred to an on-call physician. That physician will attempt to resolve the medical issue over the phone, and will contact the on-call Island medical provider if he/she feels that the patient needs to be seen immediately for further evaluation or treatment.

We are not sure yet when the new agreement will actually start. It will either be sometime this spring or early summer. More later.

Celebrating Winter

Celebrating Winter - Island Style was enjoyed by all who joined the fun between February 10th through the 19th. Who knew we could have so much fun, entertainment and, of course, food?

Weather challenged several events as we went from early spring to bitter winter in just that short week of time. However, a good snow fall helped the Snow Sculpting Contest which resulted in prizes being awarded to the Gibson's, Student Council and the Hokkanen's for their efforts. The Winter Carnival, sponsored by the WI School Student Council and the Parent Faculty Assn. hosted free games, food and horse drawn wagon rides for kids of all ages. A well attended a Snowflake Dance and the Winter Walk through the Heritage Trail, provided new events to come out and enjoy your day or evening and were welcomed by many.

The Fish Derby schedule was altered due to weather but the ever popular Lion's Club Bingo event went off without a hitch. The Chili Cook Off brought entries from off Island and the lucky contestants for this event were Carol Lemon, Susan Boede (Ellison Bay) and Del Garmon. From Chili and hot dogs to an Abelskiever Dinner at Bethel Church, the foodies were bound to find something to nibble, gulp or munch. While food seems to be at the center of all Island events, the Island Players went center stage at the TPAC and entertained us with "The Mousetrap" with a great performance.

While there's plenty of winter ahead, many have warm memories of good times, good people and good food.

Celebrating Winter - Island Style is a celebration of our community spirit which is alive and well fed!

By Carol Stayton

Island Forums for Progress

The February Forum for Progress was held in the Gym and was attended by about 125 very interested citizens. The principal topics were school funding and the tax burden imposed by NWTC. The special guest for the Forum was our state representative, Garey Bies, who took the time to come to Washington Island to listen to our concerns and to tell us some of the things he is doing in Madison to help us. He spoke first about Senate Bill 514, which he has authored along with our state senator, Alan Lasee. This bill, which will be discussed in Committee on March 1, would give an additional \$180,000 to any school district that is completely surrounded by water. Those present were encouraged to send letters and e-mails to the members of the Education Committee.

Representative Bies also spoke about his efforts to introduce and pass a bill to change the state formula for funding public education so as to greatly reduce the dependence on property taxes as the funding source.

A number of people spoke vehemently about the injustice of the burden imposed on Island taxpayers by the nearly \$500,000 sent to fund NWTC, based on our high assessed property valuation. Representative Bies noted that efforts are being made in the Legislature to have the Board of NWTC be elected, rather than appointed, so they would have accountability.

Dr. Susan Chastan, District Administrator of the Washington Island School, gave a very informative PowerPoint presentation on the need for the \$234,000 referendum to finance operation of the School at only the same level as in the past year. She pointed out that the actual new money asked for in the referendum is only \$93,000, of which \$55,000 is to fund a business education and computer teacher, with the rest going for mandated salary and benefit increases. According to Dr. Chastan's figures, the additional tax on a home valued at \$200,000 would be \$66.

The series of Forums for Progress, sponsored jointly by the Town and the Chamber of Commerce, have become an excellent venue for citizens to discuss their concerns about a variety of topics, especially growth and economic development, in an open and non-competitive environment.

One of the intended outcomes of these monthly Forums will be to provide a consensus for the Island's submissions to the Comprehensive Plan being prepared by Door County. In fact, the next Forum, scheduled for March 25th at 10: AM, is expected to feature Becky Kerwin, an employee of the County Planning Department who is responsible for gathering the information for the Door County Comprehensive Plan.

Broadband Internet Access is on the Way!

Thanks to the efforts of Robert Cornell and the REA, it appears that the Island will soon have high speed broadband Internet access at a reasonable cost over the electric wires. Robert reports that the response to the surveys sent out earlier this year was very positive and that more than enough people expressed interest in signing up for this unique method of broadband access. As of this writing, it is expected that the system will be up and running Island-wide by the summer.

Specific information will be coming from the REA soon.



Town Chairman

